

BOOK REVIEWS AND NEWS

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BLOOD GROUPS AND DISEASES

A Study of Associations of Diseases with Blood Groups and Other Polymorphisms

By A.E. Mourant, A.C. Kopeć and K. Domaniewska-Sobczak (London, U.K.). Oxford University Press, Oxford 1978. Hard cover with jacket, 28.5 × 22.5 cm, IX + 328 pp. Price: £ 25.

A sequel to *The Distribution of the Human Blood Groups and Other Polymorphisms*, recently published by the same authors in the same monumental series of the Oxford Monographs on Medical Genetics, *Blood Groups and Diseases* provides a vast body of data on the associations of diseases with blood groups and other polymorphisms. Over 1,000 publications have been analyzed and their results tabulated, statistically treated and interpreted.

The volume is subdivided into two main parts: a series of descriptive chapters and a series of tables. The first part is introduced by two chapters, one general and one devoted to the genetics, biochemistry and serology of the various polymorphisms under examination. Specific chapters then follow, describing the associations found in a variety of conditions, such as neoplastic diseases, disorders related to pregnancy, peptic ulcers, diabetes mellitus, rheumatic fever and rheumatic heart disease, diseases of the circulatory system, etc. The descriptive part is completed by an account of the phenylthiocarbamide tasting system, the α_1 protease inhibitor system, and the histocompatibility antigens.

The second part consists in a series of tables where the results of about 1,000 studies observing given polymorphisms in a variety of diseases are reported. For each study, the place of observation, the bibliographic reference, the absolute and relative frequencies, and a χ^2 analysis, are reported. The detailed tables on the ABO, MN, Rh blood group systems, the ABH secretor, plasma haptoglobin, and PTC tasting systems, are followed by very useful tabular summaries.

The volume is completed by an Appendix on the associations between HLA and disease, reproduced from the original report from the HLA and Disease Registry of Copenhagen (L.P. Rydes et al. 1976).

Because of the rapid advances in the field, Dr. Mourant may well be right in concluding that "new and perhaps very different editions will be needed in the coming years". Nevertheless, there seems to be little doubt that *Blood Groups and Diseases* will prove an invaluable piece of reference not only to the specialist but more generally to the human biologist.

HEALTH AND THE HUNTER-GATHERER

Biomedical Studies on the Hunting and Gathering Populations of Southern Africa.

By G.T. Nurse and T. Jenkins (Johannesburg). S. Karger, Basel 1977. Vol. 8 in the series, Monographs in Human Genetics, edited by L. Beckman and M. Hauge. Soft cover, 15.5 × 22.5 cm, X + 126 pp. Subject index. Price not indicated.

A valuable addition to Karger's series of Monographs in Human Genetics, this nice booklet provides a detailed description of the biological status of the hunting and gathering populations of Southern Africa. These consist of a variety of groups, among which the two major ones, Khoisian (Bushmen and Hottentots) and Negro, not all of whom biologically interrelated. In fact, even though most of them speak the same (Khoisian) language, there appears to be little evidence of gene exchange among these populations. The booklet is subdivided into the following main sections: (1) The Southern African deserts and their inhabitants, (2) The physical characters of the Southern African hunter-gatherers, (3) The medical relevance of the genetic polymorphisms, (4) Polymorphisms of no known medical relevance, (5) Adaptation to the environment, (6) Population structure among the Southern African hunter-gatherers.

THE RIBONUCLEIC ACIDS

Second Edition

Edited by P.R. Stewart and D.S. Letham (Canberra, Australia). Springer-Verlag, New York 1977. Hard cover, 24.5 × 17 cm, IX + 374 pp, 55 illustrations. Subject index. Price: DM 47.40, US \$ 23.70.

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